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Letter dated 13 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the activities of the Working Group for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the report circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Report on the activities of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016

I. Introduction

1. The Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations was established pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council adopted on 31 January 2001 (S/PRST/2001/3).

2. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, Fodé Seck, was appointed Chair of the Working Group for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016 (see S/2017/2/Rev.1).

3. The present report highlights the structure and substance of the meetings of the Working Group in 2016. In accordance with its mandate, the Working Group considered a number of peacekeeping issues relevant to the responsibilities of the Security Council as well as aspects of individual peacekeeping operations, without prejudice to the competence of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. The programme of meetings was intended to focus the Working Group on particularly important issues, most of which were raised in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/95-S/2015/446).

II. Meetings of the Working Group

4. The Working Group continued to promote triangular cooperation among the Security Council, the troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat, seeking, in particular, to improve coordination within the peacekeeping architecture and to address important thematic issues relating to peacekeeping. It held one organizational meeting and five thematic meetings with troop- and police-contributing countries and heard briefings by senior officials from the Secretariat and regional organizations, as well as from permanent representatives and observers to the United Nations (see annex).

5. The Working Group discussed the following themes:

(a) Use of technology in peacekeeping operations;

(b) Partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations: strengthening the role of regional actors in peacekeeping operations;

(c) Potential for complementarity between United Nations counter-terrorism entities and peacekeeping operations;

(d) Policy framework for intelligence in peacekeeping operations;

(e) Protection of civilians: strengthening ties with political strategies.

A. Use of technology in peacekeeping operations

6. On 28 April, the Working Group met to discuss the use of technology and innovation in peacekeeping operations. In advance of the meeting, the Chair circulated a concept note (S/2016/1019).

7. In his opening remarks, the Chair underlined the importance of innovation and technology in the current context in which peacekeeping operations were increasingly taking place in complex, hostile and volatile asymmetric environments.

8. He also indicated that the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions was hampered by multifaceted and complex challenges that made the implementation of mandates, and in particular the protection of civilians, ever more difficult, especially as a result of new developments such as armed and/or terrorist groups with near-military capabilities. Accordingly, he emphasized the need to discuss those issues and welcomed the opportunity to take part in the current panel discussion.

9. The first panellist, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, emphasized the need to boost security for troops facing multifaceted threats resulting from the various changes affecting peacekeeping operations. He also stated that resorting to innovation and technology in peacekeeping was not a luxury but a necessity, given that it made it possible to work more effectively, have more knowledge of the situation on the ground and improve the living conditions of peacekeepers. He said that many of the tools available to peacekeeping missions were obsolete and that the United Nations needed to embark on a cultural revolution in the form of innovation and technology.

10. He underlined the impact of technology on working and living conditions in the field and highlighted how peacekeeping operations could leverage innovation and technology in other areas, such as tactical challenges, reconnaissance, accommodation and military transport, to improve the speed of deployments and tactical interventions, the recording of human rights violations, conflict mapping and public information dissemination, including for countering extremist ideologies.

11. He noted that novel products were being invented every day, for example, a type of microphone that, once in place, could determine whence a shot had been fired. That and many other concepts would undeniably be useful in peacekeeping operations.

12. He invited the United Nations to introduce a culture change by adopting appropriate and widely available technologies used in other contexts. Referring to the misgivings expressed in 2014 when drones had first been used by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), he explained that the takeover of Goma by the Mouvement du 23 mars had provided ample evidence of the Organization's lack of peacekeeping tools. Following the takeover, the launch of the first drone flight had, he said, radically changed the perception of the situation on the ground.

13. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the need to develop a policy framework to define the rules governing the use of technology in peacekeeping, advocating

strengthened data protection and the introduction of a modus operandi with the host country.

14. The second panellist, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, reviewed the strategy of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support on the use of technology, which sought to implement the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in United Nations Peacekeeping. In addition to the introduction of novel technologies, the strategy included expanding the partnership for technology in peacekeeping operations.

15. He mentioned the example of lighter-than-air aircraft as a justification for using modern technologies and recalled that other innovations, such as the medium earth orbit satellites of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), were already being used. He emphasized the importance of training personnel to use those tools efficiently.

16. As to situational awareness, he indicated that a geospatial tracking system could be used to access all data on missions in the field, provide an overview of the situation, improve planning and ensure effective decision-making.

17. As to the environment, he emphasized the need to reduce carbon footprints. Highlighting the fact that only 33 of 10,000 vehicles available to all peacekeeping missions were so-called "light-duty vehicles", he suggested that measures should be taken to reduce the environmental footprint of the missions, for example through the use of solar-powered vehicles.

18. During the discussion, participants acknowledged the importance of using new technologies to provide better protection to peacekeeping personnel and enable them to carry out their mandate more efficiently. In that regard, a number of participants highlighted that the use of technology was a subject of prolonged negotiations in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and emphasized the role of the Special Committee, which was mandated to discuss all policy-related issues in peacekeeping.

19. There were, however, concerns about the effectiveness of drones in many missions, the quality of the services provided by private sector contractors and the assurance that countries that hosted missions would give blanket approval for the use of such technologies. Data protection, confidentiality and the security of gathered data also gave cause for concern.

20. To overcome resistance to and promote the introduction of new technologies, and to build trust regarding their use, it was suggested that regulatory frameworks could be drafted and put in place in close coordination with Member States, especially in the fields of data gathering and processing.

21. Also mentioned was the importance of identifying best practices in the area of interaction with host countries, finding the best ways to engage with them and determining how to ensure confidentiality.

22. A number of Working Group members underlined the need to ensure that gathered data were used only to protect peacekeepers and never against other Member States.

23. Some members emphasized the importance of training peacekeeping personnel to make the best use of technological tools.

24. In the area of environmental conservation, it was suggested that specific incentives could be put in place to encourage troop- and police-contributing countries and host countries to show greater concern for environmental issues.

25. The members of the Working Group agreed on the need to give further consideration to the use of new technologies in peacekeeping operations. It was proposed that the possibility of devoting a special section to technology in the work of the Special Committee could be examined.

B. Partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations: strengthening the role of regional actors in peacekeeping operations

26. On 27 May, the Working Group organized a thematic discussion on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, addressing capacity-building for regional actors in peacekeeping operations. In advance of the meeting, the Chair circulated a concept note (S/2016/1016).

27. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund, Donald Kaberuka, and the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Ioannis Vrailas, were the main speakers.

28. In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the context of the meeting, which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the joint consultations between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

29. He also indicated that the discussion was part of the continuing consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. One of the most important recommendations was for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, and in particular the African Union, given its special status as a strategic partner of the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping and security.

30. He expressed regret that the African Union was facing major challenges in fulfilling its potential in the area of peacekeeping and security on the continent, at a time when it was assuming greater responsibility in that area. Most of all, he emphasized the urgent need for flexible, sustainable and predictable funding for African Union peacekeeping operations, which explained the decision to place that issue at the centre of the discussion.

31. Endorsing those comments, the High Representative for the Peace Fund stressed that the United Nations strategic partnership came at a key juncture for the African Union because of the following factors:

(a) The changing nature of the threats to international peace and security, leading to increased demand for stronger and more proactive peacekeeping operations;

(b) The demand for African Union intervention in crises and conflicts, which could only grow in the future;

(c) A renewed interest in preventing conflicts and finding political solutions through conflict mediation;

(d) The complex interests at stake in modern peacekeeping operations, to which no single organization could respond adequately on its own.

32. In the light of those factors, he called for a strengthening of the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, especially in the search for predictable funding modalities for African Union peacekeeping operations. He specified that his mandate was focused on seeking a sustainable basis for the funding of African Union peacekeeping operations and on redefining new cooperation modalities between the African Union and the United Nations in that area, centred on the following three main objectives:

(a) To restructure the African Union Peace Fund by improving its governance, accountability, operational procedures and strategic orientation;

(b) To develop a credible road map for fulfilling the commitment of the African Union to contributing 25 per cent of the cost of its efforts on peace and security;

(c) To work with the United Nations and the international community to obtain the remaining 75 per cent from United Nations contributions.

33. The Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union recalled that the European Union had long supported the efforts of the African Union and regional African mechanisms to maintain peace and security on the continent. He reiterated its commitment to continuing its activities alongside African leaders and other partners with the aim of finding solutions to the issue of the sustainable and predictable funding of African Union peacekeeping operations.

34. Going beyond the importance of providing financial resources, he emphasized how essential it was to have an agreed cooperation, management and oversight framework to advance the partnership between the European Union and the African Union and boost its impact in the field.

35. He reiterated the determination of the European Union to support African efforts to provide its own security, recalling the establishment by the European Union of the African Peace Facility, which had raised more than €2 billion over the past decade. He explained that the activities funded within that framework covered the following areas:

(a) Support for African Union peacekeeping operations;

(b) Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture;

(c) Initiatives within the framework of the rapid response mechanism.

36. He also recalled that the European Union had decided, in July 2015, to redirect support for the Peace Fund towards tackling the challenge of sustainability and had increased its contribution to the Fund from €750 million to €900 million. The increase had made it possible to continue support for the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) while contributing to new African Union

peacekeeping operations such as the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram and the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Guinea-Bissau. An additional grant of €710 million for the Fund had been approved for the period from 2016 to 2018.

37. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations underlined the essential nature of the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, on the basis of their comparative advantages.

38. He said that that paradigm shift, based on the contribution that each organization could make to politics, security, human rights, development or humanitarian issues, demonstrated a clear new awareness that no single organization could effectively respond to current challenges in the areas of peacekeeping and security, which were increasingly complex and multifaceted.

39. The new paradigm of "peacekeeping in partnership" also meant that there was a need to broaden the understanding of partnerships beyond bilateral relationships between the United Nations and individual regional organizations, or between regional organizations.

40. The issue of funding, he said, was inseparable from the strategic nature of the partnership for peacekeeping operations. Accordingly, he called for more predictable funding and sustainable support for African Union peacekeeping operations when authorized by the Security Council.

41. During the discussions, several members of the Working Group welcomed the commitment of the African Union to covering 25 per cent of the costs of its peace and security efforts by 2020. Several members also stressed the importance of considering the issue of the establishment of a sustainable and predictable funding mechanism for African Union-led peace support operations.

42. The members of the Working Group recalled the importance of developing a two-way relationship for an effective partnership, involving regular consultations.

43. They emphasized the need to identify practical means for improving relations between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

44. The need for improvements to the operational capacities of the African Union, to enable it to respond to equipment needs while complying with United Nations standards, was also a concern raised by the members of the Working Group.

45. The members of the Working Group pointed out the importance of a holistic approach to the issue which, beyond peacekeeping, made it possible to reflect on the manner in which conflict prevention and the guarantee of peace could be made more specific.

C. Potential for complementarity between United Nations counter-terrorism entities and peacekeeping operations

46. On 24 June, the Working Group organized a discussion on whether there was room for complementarity between United Nations counter-terrorism entities and

peacekeeping operations. In advance of the meeting, the Chair circulated a concept note (S/2016/1018).

47. The Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Deputy Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate each gave a briefing.

48. In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the context of the meeting, which was held at a time when there was a worrying increase in threats to international peace and security.

49. Referring to the examples of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MONUSCO, MINUSCA, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and AMISOM, he emphasized the urgent need to adapt the presence and activities of missions to their environments, as well as the need to develop innovative cooperation between relevant United Nations bodies, in order to provide a coordinated and effective response.

50. The Deputy Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate said that terrorist threats were growing in areas in which peacekeeping operations were active. There were therefore obvious reasons to boost cooperation, coordination and synergies between United Nations counter-terrorism bodies and peacekeeping operations.

51. He said that relevant counter-terrorism bodies should support peacekeeping operations by sharing their expertise and experience in preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism. He stressed that their contributions would be made more effective if they were closely associated with mission planning.

52. He recalled that Security Council resolutions 2129 (2013), 2185 (2014), 2195 (2014) and 2242 (2015) and the presidential statement of 19 November 2014 (S/PRST/2014/23) provided a solid basis for boosting cooperation within and between institutions. Those documents, he noted, called upon, inter alia, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, the special envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and other relevant United Nations entities to strengthen their cooperation and synergies, including by means geared towards developing dialogue and the exchange of information, in particular during the mission planning and consideration stages.

53. He advocated the implementation of the "Delivering as one" approach and suggested that the following approaches could deliver greater synergies:

(a) Considering possible channels for sharing information between counter-terrorism entities, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and troop- and police-contributing countries;

(b) Holding regular meetings involving the relevant departments to enhance cooperation and identify areas of complementarity;

(c) Boosting the contribution of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism to the work of the Working Group and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

54. The Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service recalled the conclusion outlined in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations according to which United Nations peacekeeping missions, owing to their composition and character, were not suited to engage in military counter-terrorism operations. Among other aspects, they lacked the specific equipment, intelligence, logistics, capabilities and specialized military preparation required for such operations. She therefore placed strong emphasis on the importance of political solutions.

55. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that action could also be taken as part of efforts to adapt the presence and activities of peacekeeping operations in order to better prevent terrorism and violent extremism. Such action could include the following:

(a) Developing a better understanding of violent extremism and its impact;

(b) Providing peacekeeping missions with the capacity to counter asymmetric threats and tactics, especially through enhanced access to improvised explosive device detection programmes, technology and improved resilience resulting from greater mobility and medical back-up capacity;

(c) Building national capacity to prevent violent extremism by training security forces in community policing and counter-terrorism, adopting legal frameworks and national strategies for the prevention of violent extremism, building the capacity of legal actors in the investigation and prosecution of terrorism-related offences, preventing radicalization in prisons through static and dynamic security, risk assessments and information gathering in prisons, supporting national programmes against improvised explosive devices, managing border controls and integrating counter-terrorism into security sector reform programmes.

56. The members of the Working Group recalled the conclusion of the High-level Panel regarding the unsuitability of peacekeeping operations to carry out counter-terrorism action, while also acknowledging that United Nations missions, which were exposed to asymmetric threats, needed sufficient assets and training to protect themselves.

57. They stressed the need to develop cooperation within and between institutions so that peacekeeping operations could benefit from the expertise and support of relevant United Nations bodies.

D. Policy framework for intelligence in peacekeeping operations

58. On 27 July, the Working Group organized a thematic discussion on the draft policy framework for intelligence in peacekeeping operations being developed by the Secretariat. In advance of the meeting, the Chair circulated a concept note (S/2016/1033).

59. The Working Group heard briefings by the Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, Omar Hilale.

60. The Chair, who had chosen the subject of the meeting, recalled that the Secretariat had, on several occasions in recent months, consulted Member States about its initial work to develop a draft policy framework for intelligence in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

61. Member States had, at that time, identified important issues that needed to be resolved to ensure that the framework being defined was appropriate and aligned with the mandates and context of United Nations peacekeeping and that it could be successfully implemented. Those issues included the following:

(a) Identification of information-gathering techniques, tactics and procedures appropriate to a United Nations peacekeeping context;

(b) Confidentiality, secure storage and management of information gathered during a mission cycle;

(c) Definition of parameters for using and sharing information gathered by a mission, within the United Nations and with the host countries;

(d) Operational security of the troop- and police-contributing countries that contributed to the capacity of mission information-sharing structures;

(e) Oversight mechanisms.

62. The Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service recalled the importance of having open exchanges on all sensitive matters that remained to be considered in the development of the policy framework for intelligence in peacekeeping operations. She also recalled that the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the threats that they currently faced had led the Security Council, the Secretariat and Member States to place greater importance on intelligence as a key tool enabling missions to operate safely and effectively.

63. With reference to the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations in difficult environments, for example in Mali and South Sudan, she said that missions sought to adapt on a case-by-case basis in order to respond to each specific context, but that an intelligence policy would enable them to better analyse the scenarios, environment and nature of threats.

64. She maintained that the broad consensus that had emerged from prior consultations was that missions needed to be able to gather information swiftly and reliably in order to understand and respond effectively to threats as they fulfilled their mandates.

65. She pointed out that the policy framework must be governed by clear principles, parameters and oversight regimes that ensured a transparent, responsible and professional approach.

66. Similarly, the mission intelligence cycle should focus on the safety and security of the mission and its personnel so that peacekeeping operations could have genuine freedom of movement, carry out their activities and fulfil their mandates.

67. Regarding information gathering and analysis, she said that the Secretariat proposed that the strategic framework should explicitly state that peacekeeping operations should not gather information by covert technical or human means.

68. She considered that those parameters should be reflected in specific mission activity support plans to identify appropriate techniques, tactics and procedures and implement the oversight regime defined in the policy framework.

69. Regarding relationships with host countries, she indicated that it was important, when developing the intelligence policy framework, to note that the fundamental principles of peacekeeping, including consent, should be fully respected. The mission mandate and the status-of-forces agreement would remain the key legal foundations for the presence and activities of the mission.

70. Furthermore, she said, if the framework explicitly ruled out covert activities, it would mean that missions would not use any tools without informing the host Government. Missions would certainly share intelligence with host Governments, and vice versa, where necessary.

71. With regard to the concerns of neighbouring Member States, she recalled that, since the first deployment of drones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and later in Mali and the Central African Republic, the Secretariat had implemented several lessons learned by defining controlled access areas with different authorization levels and sensors that could be programmed to have shutter control, in order to limit their focus to authorized areas only. Arrangements for those measures could be reflected in the strategic framework as an integral part of the mission intelligence support plan or the standing operational procedure.

72. She noted that two recurrent criticisms in the area of information security and confidentiality were:

(a) How to ensure the operational security of the mission, restrict dissemination within the mission and protect sources;

(b) How to respond to the national operational security requirements of troop-contributing countries participating in mission information systems.

73. She stressed that, in general, the framework should define a clear responsibility and oversight regime within the intelligence cycle and at all stages of the work, including through the use of verification files. The matter would have to be considered more thoroughly to ensure that the required mechanisms were in place at the appropriate levels.

74. She recalled that the experience of drone deployment, first by MONUSCO and later by other missions, had stimulated detailed planning and the development of practices on issues such as access rights, electronic surveillance tools and the physical architecture of buildings.

75. She went on to say that, from a legal standpoint, all information gathered by peacekeeping operations units was the property of the mission, but that, as more advanced intelligence tools were introduced, that principle would have to be reconciled with the national legal framework of troop-contributing countries governing what could be shared.

76. She considered that defining the principles and limits of the use of the information would provide greater clarity. For example, the letters of assist for units provided by troop-contributing countries could be amended to include detailed modalities on the use of information.

77. In her opinion, consideration should be given to, among other things, rationalizing the role of civilian components, putting in place mechanisms to ensure that missions took a holistic approach and strengthening the skills and processes of all components in order for them to interact with the local population and learn lessons, while ensuring that missions had all the skills required to carry out a thorough and balanced analysis.

78. She stressed that peacekeeping operations involved unique challenges for an intelligence system and that the response to those challenges needed intelligence concepts, structures and tools adapted to the context and realities of missions. That would require all parties to be creative and flexible in considering new approaches that were not necessarily based on preconceived models.

79. The Permanent Representative of Morocco said that the meaning of "intelligence" should be clarified because it had given rise to concerns that had yet to be dispelled. He suggested that the discussions of intelligence issues were preliminary. Several major issues, such as the management of sensitive information, confidentiality, costs and the ownership of the information gathered, needed much more thorough consideration. Most of all, he emphasized confidentiality management and indicated that the policy framework should clearly define the scope and use of the information gathered.

80. He also said that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the most suitable setting for developing the intelligence policy framework. In doing so, the imperative of mission security should be reconciled with respect for the sovereignty of States.

81. Some Member States had previously raised concerns regarding the use of information gathering in United Nations peacekeeping, and had highlighted that all United Nations entities and Member States had an obligation to cooperate with Security Council sanctions committees; therefore, any information gathered could not be guaranteed to be limited to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Other Member States had also highlighted that the effect of information gathering on neighbouring countries went beyond drones and unmanned aerial vehicles and that close coordination with neighbouring countries was crucial in that regard. Working Group members reiterated that more consultations with Member States were necessary and that any policy framework must be discussed in the Special Committee.

82. The members of the Working Group stressed the importance of information gathering for the security and effectiveness of missions as they fulfilled their mandates, especially in asymmetric environments. Nevertheless, they also considered that it would be crucial to pursue their discussions in order to shed more light on issues that required more thorough consideration.

E. Protection of civilians: strengthening ties with political strategies

83. On 3 November, the Working Group organized a thematic discussion on the protection of civilians, addressing the strengthening of ties with political strategies. In advance of the meeting, the Chair circulated a concept note (S/2016/1017).

84. The Director of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the military adviser at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, Brigadier General Thierry Lion, were the main speakers.

85. In his opening remarks, the Chair said that the issue of the protection of civilians needed to be resolved, given the changing threats currently faced by United Nations missions. He recalled that, in many theatres of peacekeeping operations, the presence of criminal groups acting on the margins of international law was a serious threat to the proper fulfilment of mandates to protect civilians.

86. He also stressed the shortcomings and challenges that needed to be addressed, especially in contexts in which missions were deployed in hostile environments or those where there was little or no peace to keep.

87. In that connection, he indicated that the promotion of political and non-armed strategies, capacity-building and the strengthening of operational concepts in peacekeeping operations should be given greater attention in the search for sustainable solutions to the problems encountered in the protection of civilians.

88. In his statement, the Director of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division reviewed recent developments in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, highlighting the challenges faced by peacekeeping operations in protecting civilians. He also indicated that the protection of civilians was not confined to operational and tactical aspects and should include the key aspect of a political strategy.

89. He added that, in the absence of a viable political strategy to end fighting and support a peaceful settlement, no number of troops would ever be enough to protect civilians and that, without a political settlement leading to a legitimate authority with the will and ability to ensure the security of its people, the protection of civilians could not be guaranteed.

90. Pointing out that political strategies and the protection of civilians were therefore closely related, he also recalled that peacekeepers could help to establish, support and protect a political process and help national actors to fulfil their sovereign obligation to protect civilians, but could not replace those actors. For that reason, the primary responsibility for protection lay with the host States.

91. In his opinion, a political settlement could not be pursued unless the security and needs of the people involved in a conflict were taken into account. Furthermore, unless the United Nations met the urgent need for protection amid an armed conflict, the search for peace was likely to be even more difficult.

92. He also made four observations that highlighted the implications and connections between the protection of civilians and the pursuit of a political settlement.

93. The first observation was that, in contexts such as that of South Sudan, where there was no viable political process and civilians were "targeted directly", the need for protection was urgent and enormous. When missions took on that task in the absence of a parallel and interdependent political effort, however, they would probably find themselves dealing with the consequences of conflict, not its causes. The missions would be likely to lose the political initiative as a result.

94. He considered that it was at that point that the role of the Security Council, Member States and the main stakeholders, including regional organizations, became essential and that a coordinated political effort required the actions of the main local, national and international actors to be consistent. If political efforts failed, it was time to reflect upon what missions could reasonably be expected to achieve.

95. His second observation was that the commitment to taking protection into account in the context of political efforts required consideration of the role of host States, which were often parties to the conflict. Whereas peacekeeping forces were deployed with their consent, the reality was that government forces sometimes threatened civilians. That could put peacekeeping forces and the host authorities on a collision course. Tensions over protection mandates could sometimes compromise other mission activities. The decision to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping operation ultimately reflected an agreement between the Security Council and a country. The peacekeeping operation could not be a substitute for that relationship.

96. Missions were required to do whatever they could to establish and maintain an effective relationship with host States and peoples. Responsible behaviour by all peacekeepers was therefore essential.

97. His third observation was that considering protection to be a key component of a political strategy meant being realistic about the risks involved. When peacekeepers were deployed in conflicts where civilians were being "deliberately targeted", they accepted a certain level of risk. The question then became the acceptable level of risk and the risk abatement strategies that could be put in place to manage that risk. Troops and police, in his opinion, were entitled to have detailed information on measures being implemented, to ensure that they could operate safely in those environments, and to hold the Secretariat responsible for providing basic support and a political commitment to support security operations. Troop-contributing countries also had a key role in helping to improve security and risk management, and they must be ready to do so.

98. The fourth observation was that the interdependence between policy and protection meant that protection consisted of a set of mission responsibilities and efforts, as well as full responsibility on the part of the Secretariat. Protection was too often considered to be the job of the military and police components of a mission. Experience showed that protection must be mainstreamed into all mission work: political good offices, planning processes, programming and messaging activities. The understanding and capacity of senior managers should be improved, and efforts should be made to mainstream protection strategies into mission concepts and plans. Nevertheless, there was also a need for support, in particular from the Security Council, to ensure that analyses, plans, activities and reports were systematic and consistent in the area of protection.

99. The military adviser at the Permanent Mission of France, who shared his experience as a force commander in the Central African Republic, indicated that an overall political response was the basis for any effective protection. A strictly humanitarian view of the security approach should be abandoned.

100. Suggesting that the various mission strategies were interconnected, he said that every advance in the area of security should be accompanied by the launch of a political process. He also emphasized engagement with the people, whose trust was key to establishing a successful protection strategy. He therefore recommended that troops should communicate better with the people and with local and religious structures during their missions. He advocated the coordination and planning of mission activities as part of a holistic approach consistent with a political strategy.

101. The members of the Working Group stressed the importance of taking greater account of political strategies in the protection of civilians and of promoting strategic convergence in missions by avoiding fragmentation.

102. They also reiterated the primary responsibility of the host country in the protection of civilians and the support role of peacekeeping operations.

103. Furthermore, they reiterated the role of troop-contributing countries, especially in training and preparing contingents to implement the mandate effectively. In that regard, some Working Group members expressed the view that rapid deployment and the protection of civilians often required enabling units and that countries with such units should be encouraged to provide them to peacekeeping missions, while others argued that the question needed further discussion in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

104. Large-scale participation by troop- and police-contributing countries and an effective contribution by the Secretariat to the work of the Working Group during 2016 were signs of strong interest in the activities of the Working Group.

105. That positive trend should therefore be harnessed in order to further strengthen the strategic dialogue between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries.

106. The important issues considered by the Working Group require more substantial dialogue in order to improve the impact on the ground.

107. Where relevant, information sessions with troop-contributing countries and consultations at the time of mandate renewal could contribute to comprehensive discussions on all aspects of mandates. To promote frank and continuing dialogue between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries, discussions should be based on thorough and objective analyses of the situation on the ground and of the capacity required to respond adequately.

108. The experience in South Sudan shows that far more intense dialogue is needed on issues relating to the implementation of mandates, including the need to protect civilians.

109. In the spirit of the presidential statement of 31 December 2015 (S/PRST/2015/26), troop- and police-contributing countries, the Secretariat and the Security Council should work harder to enhance triangular consultations.

110. Lastly, as with those of other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, Working Group documents should be made available on https://eroom.un.org/eRoom.

Annex

Meetings of the Working Group in 2016

Date	*Briefers*	*Theme*
28 April	Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support	Use of technologies in peacekeeping
27 May	El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Donald Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations	Partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations: strengthening the role of regional actors in peacekeeping operations
24 June	Renata Dwan, Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Weixiong Chen, Deputy Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	Potential for complementarity between United Nations counter-terrorism entities and peacekeeping operations
27 July	Renata Dwan, Head of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Omar Hilale, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations	Policy framework for intelligence in peacekeeping operations
3 November	Jack Christofides, Director of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Brigadier General Thierry Lion, military adviser at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations	Protection of civilians: strengthening ties with political strategies